Child safety on WhatsApp

WhatsApp says the **minimum age** to use it is **16**, but younger children can still use it easily.

What's the problem?

> There's a risk of bullying, particularly in group chats
> There's a risk of seeing content of a sexual nature, or showing violence and hatred
> There's a threat to safety if your child shares their live location, particularly with people they don't know in person
> They may receive spam or hoax messages
> In group chats, any users who aren't in your child's contacts can see messages they post in the group, and your child will be able to see messages they post

5 steps to help your child use WhatsApp safely

1. Keep their personal information and location private

By default, WhatsApp shows profile photos, status and when you last used it to all users.

Encourage your child to only share this information with their contacts, and to only talk to people they know in person on the app, as anyone could pretend to be a child online.

To check and change these settings:

> Tap the 3 dots in the top-right of the home screen, then > Settings > Account > Privacy. Tap the setting you want to change, then choose who it should be visible to

WhatsApp also has a feature that you can use to share your 'live location' with others. Tell your child to keep this turned off, or to only share their location with people they trust.

To check this:

> Tap the 3 dots in the top-right of the home screen, then > Settings > Account > Privacy > Live location

2. Remind your child to be careful about what they share

It's easy to forward messages, photos and videos to others via this app. Even if your child deletes an image from their phone after sharing it, this won't delete the image from other people's phones.

So encourage your child to think carefully about what they share and with who. Before they share anything, tell them to ask themselves: "would I want others to see what I'm about to send?"

3. Remind your child they can leave group chats

If they see something they're not comfortable with in a group chat, or are in a chat with someone they don't know and are uncomfortable with, they should leave the group. To do this:

> Go into the group chat, tap the 3 dots in the top-right, then > More > Exit group

4. Make sure your child knows how to report and block people

Whenever they first receive a message from an unknown number, WhatsApp will give them an option to report the message.

If someone in your child's contacts is upsetting them or making them uncomfortable, they can report or block them at any point. (WhatsApp won't tell the user they've been blocked/reported.)

To do this:

> On an iPhone, open the chat, tap the contact's name, then > Block contact > Block (or Report and Block)
> In Android, open the chat, tap the 3 dots in the top-right, then > More > Block (or Report)

To report issues like offensive or abusive content or spam:

> In Android, tap the 3 dots in the top-right of the home screen, then > Settings > Help > Contact us
> On iPhone, go to Settings > Help > Contact us

5. Encourage your child to be alert to spam and hoax messages

Explain that these can appear to come from contacts, as well as people they don't know. Tell your child to watch out for messages that:

> Ask them to tap on a link, or specifically to click on a link to activate a new feature
> Ask them to share personal information like bank account details, date of birth or passwords
> Ask them to forward the message
> Say they have to pay to use WhatsApp
> Have spelling or grammar errors

What can I do about online bullying?

> Encourage your child to talk to you if someone says something upsetting or hurtful to them
> Look for signs they may be being bullied, like being afraid or reluctant to go to school, feeling nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn, or losing sleep
> Tell our school about **any** bullying your child experiences

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Sources used in this factsheet

> WhatsApp, Net Aware
> https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/whatsapp/
> Bullying and cyberbullying, NSPCC
> https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/
> Frequently asked questions, WhatsApp
> https://faq.whatsapp.com/en

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Child safety on TikTok

TikTok is a video-sharing app. Users can upload and share short videos of themselves lip-syncing to songs or acting out comedy sketches, and add special effects. They can gain followers ('fans') and browse other people's videos.

You may have heard of the app by its previous name: Musical.ly. Everything that was on Musical.ly is now on TikTok. If your child previously had a Musical.ly account they will be able to access their content on TikTok.

The age recommendation is **13 and above**. However, you don't have to prove your age when creating an account, so younger children can still use it easily. It's most popular with under-16s.

TikTok **is free to download** on Android and iOS devices (Apple phones and tablets). It carries ads and offers in-app purchases. It has about 150 million active users worldwide and is available in over 30 languages.

What are the concerns?

On the surface, nothing. TikTok has a reputation for being unusually free of trolling and danger.

But you may have seen news reports or heard concerns about some users harassing children for nude images and videos.

What should I look out for?

> User profiles which talk about 'trading' or swapping pictures/videos

> Use of emojis that are commonly considered to be sexually suggestive (such as the aubergine)

> Hashtags, such as #tradefortrade, which clearly suggest the user is looking to trade illicit content

> The lyrical content of some songs – parents have raised concerns that it's not always age-appropriate

Users cannot exchange images and videos via in-app messaging, but once they've made contact they move on to another platform to trade, such as Snapchat.

TikTok has taken steps to remove users who it suspects are soliciting underage users. However, there are still many suggestive profiles and TikTok has committed to almost doubling the number of content moderators it employs to 10,000 to address this.

What safety options are available to parents?

Control who can view your child's videos

Set your child's account to 'private' so that your child can control who sees their videos or keep them completely private. Your child will be able to approve or deny people as 'fans', and will only be able to accept messages from followers.

Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key

Instructions for this are here:

Setting up a private account, TikTok

http://support.tiktok.com/knowledge-base/setting-up-a-private-account

Remember:

> Accounts are set to 'public' by default. Public profiles can be viewed by anyone

> Even with a private account, your child's profile information can be seen by all users. Make sure your child doesn't reveal personal information on their public profile

Restrict how your child uses the app

Use TikTok's **digital wellbeing feature** to control the time your child spends on the app and limit the appearance of content that may not be appropriate:

Digital wellbeing, TikTok

http://support.tiktok.com/knowledge-base/digital-wellbeing

Most devices also allow you to **set time limits** on game play, **set age limits** for content, and **restrict in-app purchases**. Check the user instructions for your child's device.

Make sure your child knows how to report inappropriate behaviour

Your child can use the app to report content that makes them feel uncomfortable, including accounts, videos, comments and chats. You can too. Instructions for this are here:

Report inappropriate content, TikTok

http://support.tiktok.com/knowledge-base/report-inappropriate-content

You or your child can also **block 'fans'** at any time:

Delete fans, TikTok

http://support.tiktok.com/knowledge-base/delete-fans

What else can I do?

Further tips

> Read more about privacy and safety on TikTok at http://support.tiktok.com/article-categories/privacy-safety

> Download and use the app to help you understand it

> Talk to your child about what they're doing online, and make sure they know they can talk to you about anything that upsets them

> Check your bank statements regularly for in-app purchases you're not happy with, and to make sure your child isn't getting around any passwords you've set up

Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key

Child safety on Instagram

Instagram is an app for sharing pictures and videos. The **minimum age** to have an account is **13**, but it's easy to pretend to be older to sign up.

What's the problem?

> There's a 'high' risk of seeing content of a sexual nature, and of bullying

> Children can be exposed to harmful images and advice about weight loss, self-harm and suicide

> Children may feel pressure to look a certain way – for example, from feeling like they should look like other users who share weight-loss content, and from getting praise for losing weight

> There's a risk of 'grooming' – where an adult builds a relationship with a child to manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Gangs also use apps as a way to recruit children

5 steps to help your child use Instagram safely

1. Set profile to 'private'

Instagram accounts are viewable by anyone, by default. Change this to 'private' so that only people who your child approves will be able to 'follow' them and see content they share.

To do this:

> Go to 'Settings' (tap the person icon in the top-right of the app home screen, then tap the 3 lines in the top-right and choose 'Settings')

> Then go to Privacy > Account Privacy, and turn on 'Private Account'

Encourage your child to only 'approve' people they know and trust in real life, as anyone could pretend to be a child online.

2. Restrict comments and interactions on posts

By doing this, your child can reduce the likelihood of seeing something upsetting on the app.

Open 'Settings', go to 'Privacy', and then (iPhone) 'Comment controls' or (Android) 'Comments'. Here, your child can:

> Choose who to allow comments from (under 'Allow comments from')

> Block specific people from interacting with their posts (under 'Block comments from')

> Automatically hide comments that might be offensive (under 'Hide offensive comments') – also known as the 'anti-bullying filter'

> Choose words and emojis they never want to see on their posts (under 'Manual filter')

3. Make sure your child knows about reporting and blocking

Encourage your child to block users who make them uncomfortable, and to report content they find distressing. Instagram's community guidelines don't allow bullying behaviour or content related to self-harm, suicide, eating disorders or nudity.

Reassure your child that **blocking and reporting is anonymous.**

> To **block** an account, tap the 3 dots at the top-right of the person's profile (to get there, tap their username at the top of a post), then choose 'Block'

> To **report a photo in a feed**, tap the 3 dots icon at the top of the post, then tap 'Report'

> To **report a comment**, tap the speech bubble below the comment, then (iPhone) swipe to the left, or (Android) tap and hold on the comment. Tap the exclamation mark, choose whether it's spam or a scam, or abusive content, and then select a reason why

> To **report an abusive photo, video or message that they've received directly**, open the conversation, tap and hold the abusive message, then tap 'Report'. Choose a reason for reporting the message, then tap 'Report' again

> To **report a profile** for abuse, spam or breaking the rules, tap the 3 dots in the top-right of the user's profile, then tap 'Report'. Follow the on-screen instructions and choose a reason for reporting the profile

4. Remind them to be careful about what they share

It's easy to screenshot messages or images and share them with others. So, encourage your child to think carefully about what they share and who with. Before they share anything, tell them to ask: "would I be happy for other people to see this?"

In particular, make sure your child knows **not to take, share or view naked or sexually explicit pictures of themselves or another child, either voluntarily or if asked to by someone else**.

This is known as 'sexting' and is illegal, even when the person doing it is a child. It can also be distressing for a child to be a victim of sexting, or to see an inappropriate image that someone else has shared.

5. Consider setting a daily limit on use

You may have seen news stories about children becoming obsessed with Instagram. Setting a limit for how much time your child spends on the app may help to reduce the risk of this.

Agree a suitable amount of time together. Then:

> Go to 'Settings' > 'Your activity' and choose 'Set daily reminder'. Choose a time limit

Your child will then get a reminder once they've reached the limit they've set for themselves.

What can I do if I'm worried my child may be being bullied or groomed?

> Encourage your child to talk to you if someone says something upsetting or hurtful to them

> Signs they may be being bullied include:

- Being afraid or reluctant to go to school
- Feeling nervous
- Losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- Losing sleep

Be alert to these signs, and **tell our school about any bullying that your child experiences**.

Child safety on Snapchat

Snapchat is an app for sending photos and videos (known as 'Snaps'), and text messages. The 'Stories' feature lets users share photos or videos with all their contacts at once.

Snaps disappear after being opened, usually within seconds. Stories disappear after 24 hours. Images and messages aren't automatically saved on phones.

The **minimum age** to use Snapchat is **13,** but it's easy to sign up if you're younger.

What's the problem?

> There's a 'high' risk of seeing sexual content, and of bullying

> Your child's location could be shared automatically with their contacts, which could put them in danger if they have strangers as 'friends' on the app

> There's a risk of children being 'groomed' by strangers into sharing pictures and information about themselves. Gangs also use apps to groom and recruit children

4 steps to help your child use Snapchat safely

1. Tell your child to only use it with real friends

Anyone could pretend to be a child or teenager online, so encourage your child not to talk to people they don't know in real life.

2. Use privacy settings

By default, only 'friends' your child has added on Snapchat can contact them directly and see their story or location, so encourage your child to keep those default settings.

To check and change the settings:

> Tap the person icon in the top-left of Snapchat, then the cog in the top-right. Scroll down to 'Who Can …' and tap the relevant options

> Under 'Who Can See My Location', choose 'Ghost Map' to turn location sharing off

> Under 'Who Can See Me In Quick Add' you can stop your child's profile from being suggested to strangers as a potential 'friend'

3. Talk to your child about 'sexting' and being careful about what they share

Even though images disappear in Snapchat, they can be screenshotted and then shared – outside of the original sender's control.

So, remind your child to think carefully about the images they share, and with who. Before they share anything, tell them to ask: "would I be happy for other people to see this?"

In particular, make sure your child knows **not to take, share or view naked or sexually explicit pictures of themselves or another child, either voluntarily or if asked to by someone else**.

This is known as 'sexting' and is illegal, even when the person doing it is a child. It can also be distressing for a child to be a victim of sexting, or to see an inappropriate image that someone else has shared.

4. Make sure your child knows how to use reporting and blocking functions

> To **report** a Snap or Story, press and hold on it, tap the flag, then explain the problem

> To **remove** or **block** a friend, swipe to the right to go to the 'Friends' screen, then tap and hold on the person's name. Tap 'More', then choose 'Remove friend' or 'Block'

What can I do about online bullying?

> Encourage your child to talk to you if someone says something upsetting or hurtful to them

> Look for signs they may be being bullied, like being afraid or reluctant to go to school, feeling nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn, or losing sleep

> Tell our school about **any** bullying your child experiences

There are also few ways you can save images and messages as evidence:

> Use another device to, quickly, take a photo of the image or message (this is the only way you can save the image without other people knowing)

> Tap on the message, quickly, to save it (other people will know, from the grey background)

> Take a screenshot, quickly (the person who shared it will get a notification)

> Change your 'delete' settings to save messages for 24 hours – tap the 3 grey lines in the chat you want to keep, then 'Delete chats…'. Select '24 hours after viewing'

What can I do if I think my child is being targeted by a gang?

Share your concerns with our school immediately. You can also contact the NSPCC for advice – call 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Be alert to changes in your child – such as having new unexplained possessions, changing friendship groups, behaviour and mood changes, unexplained injuries.

Sources used for this factsheet

> Snapchat, NetAware
  https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/snapchat/

> Sexting, NSPCC
  https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting/

> Snapchat Support, Snapchat and Safety Centre, Snap Inc
  https://support.snapchat.com/en-US and https://www.snap.com/en-GB/safety/safety-center/

> Joint inspections of child exploitation, Ofsted, GOV.UK – Ofsted
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-child-sexual-exploitation-and-missing-children

> Instagram biggest for child grooming online – NSPCC finds, BBC News
  https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47410520

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